



The *Art...* of Managing Children's *Artwork*

This is tricky business. You want to encourage your budding artist but not at the expense of drowning in paper. Here are a few tips to make it easier.

1) **Be Realistic.** There is just so much artwork that can be saved. Come to terms with the fact that you can't save everything or your house will be condemned. Treat artwork like a fine wine. Give it time to "breathe". With the passage of time it is easier to decide which pieces "have aged to perfection" and which have not.

2) **Divide by three.** Separate the art into three groups: Great, Good and Recycle. The Great pieces are frame worthy. They are so special that you can't part with them. Display these. The next group includes art that is good - but repetitive. An example would be one of a series of finger paintings. Save it in a box or file to be shared with Grandparents or aunts and uncles at a later date. The rest should be tossed into the recycling bin. It's difficult to do this at first. It gets easier with practice.

3) **Hang and release.** Display the art by taping it to the wall or hanging it on the fridge. Mount a bulletin board in the child's room to display the most current art. If you hang it even for a short while the child feels like you honored his work. When the newest art arrives, substitute it for the art that was hanging for the last week or so. The combination of displaying and replacing makes the adjustment easier for both parent and child.

Let the child decide. Sometimes they are able to pick favorites more easily than you are. Some experts suggest saving three to five pieces of art per year. I've never been able to go that lean. I had them fill an oversized, two gallon zip-lock bag, one per year. If the art is large and you want to avoid smashing it; roll it over an empty gift wrap tube.

4) **How to Display.** For frame worthy art there are several options. Three-ring notebook. Purchase a three-ring notebook, make it a wide one, two inches thick. Fill it with plastic sleeves and slide the artwork inside. This works well for any 8 ½ x 11" art. It is easy to assemble and gives the child a portfolio that he can look at and show to others.

At my son's preschool they always had a Spring Art Show. They strung yarn or string across the room like a clothesline and attached artwork to it. This may work well for you at home if you have the space.

Clear plastic frames. Buy the inexpensive style box frames. It's a snap to exchange old art for new.

Professionally framed. For the truly fabulous have it matted and framed.

5) **Don't forget to share.** Aunts, uncles, grandparents and godparents love to see the young artist's development. Give them a little refrigerator art! Having a stash is helpful when you want a special picture right away. Sometimes your artist may not be in the mood to create a masterpiece on demand. Having them on file saves you time and frustration.

6) **A picture is worth a thousand words.** Sculptures or art involving marshmallows, glitter or sticks should be photographed. Storing the original is too difficult. Another fun idea is to take photos of sidewalk chalk drawings or snowmen and display them with the collection. Photos are much more compact and they retain the memory. Consider storing pictures in photo pockets in the three ring binder.

7) **Be creative.** Take special pieces to a copy center and have them laminated and then use them as placemats.

One year my youngest chose to finger paint every day in preschool. You can imagine how many masterpieces we had collected by February. So for Valentine's Day, we cut his paintings into heart shapes and attached the hearts to Valentine's Day cards. They were a hit!

The Wall Street Journal had an article describing one woman's quest to save the artwork for posterity. She scanned drawings and paintings and took digital photos of 3-D artwork against the backdrop of brightly colored towels. She printed all of the photos and displayed them in an album on her coffee table. For Christmas she saved the pictures on a DVD and set it all to music and presented it as gifts What a fun idea.

8) **Long term storage.** Find a good container to store any of the keepers that are not currently on display. There are several good products on the market:

School folio. www.schoolfolio.com They offer plastic portfolio boxes in four fun colors or an all-in-one box that is large enough to store everything for your child's entire school career.

Exposures catalog, www.exposuresonline.com offers a number of Art Files.

Dick Blick, at www.dickblick.com shows a line of Blick Paper Storage Boxes that are the most affordable I've found. They also have Archival cases if you are very serious about preservation.

Copyright © 2007 Come2Order

KAREN HENKE is the owner of Come2Order in Minneapolis, MN. Visit www.come2order2day.com and request a free Time-Savers Kit which is loaded with time-saving tips and services. And sign up for a subscription to the free monthly newsletter.

